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DEPT FOR NEA/ARP AMACDONALD AND INR JYAPHE  
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [YM](#)  
SUBJECT: YEMEN'S SOUTHERNERS SAY THEY WANT MORE AMERICAN  
SUPPORT

Classified By: Ambassador Stephen Seche for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (S) SUMMARY. Across Yemen's southern governorates, political and tribal leaders and members of civil society are asking for increased U.S. support in a range of areas ) pressure on President Saleh to implement political and economic reform, financial support for local development, and moral support from the international community for recognition of political and human rights grievances. Southerners hope to capitalize on increased attention on Yemen and the January 27 London conference to secure greater understanding of and support for their issues. Anti-Saleh sentiment is prevalent, however, as is sharp criticism of December 2009 counter-terrorism operations in Abyan and Shebwa governorates widely perceived as American-led. The United States' challenge will be balancing engagement with the southern governorates ) key for tackling the root causes of Islamic extremism and resolving a debilitating political crisis - with the politically sensitive issues of support for Yemen's unity and partnering with the unpopular Saleh regime to eliminate al-Qaeda and encourage reform. END SUMMARY.  
"WE WANT A REAL PARTNERSHIP"

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12. (S) In meetings in Sana'a and Aden in January, a wide swath of post contacts asked for increased U.S. political, financial and moral support for the southern governorates. Aden's Deputy Governor and Local Council Secretary General Abdulkarim Saleh al-Shaif told PolOffs on January 30 that increased U.S. support was key to the development of Aden and reduction of both extremist religious thought and civil unrest. The leadership of the opposition Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) has consistently asked for a stronger U.S. position on the frozen political dialogue with the ruling General People's Congress (GPC) and human rights violations in the south. Qassim Dawood, Deputy Chief of the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP) in Aden, told PolOffs on January 30, "Yemen's problems can't be solved without support from the U.S. We want a real partnership with you." The Southern Movement also seeks U.S. backing. In a January 27 meeting, movement sympathizer and Abyan MP Salem Mansour al-Haydare encouraged PolOff to meet with former regime insider turned Southern Movement leader Tariq al-Fadhli and other members to understand "just how pro-American they really are." On February 3, the movement posted a Youtube video of Fadhli raising the American flag over his Zinjibar (Abyan governorate) compound as the Star Spangled Banner plays in the background. (Comment: For the last several months, Fadhli and his supporters have sought to reach out to the international community and specifically to the U.S. to demonstrate that they are not extremists and not anti-American. End Comment.)  
"LONDON WAS A NEW BEGINNING"

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13. (S) Members of civil society also pressed for increased U.S. moral and financial support and praised the January 27 London conference as a positive signal of future U.S.-Yemeni relations. "The London conference was a new beginning with a different road map for American policy on Yemen," Dr. Saif Ali Hassan, Secretary General of the Aden-based NGO Yemeni Organization for Human Rights and Liberties, said. A group of southern human rights activists agreed that Secretary Clinton's London remarks were "spot-on" and "she knows what

needs to be done." The NGOs suggested that the U.S. fund a parallel conference on human rights in Aden to coincide with follow-up meetings on the London conference.

"THEY ARE MOBILIZING THE MASSES AGAINST YOU"

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¶4. (S) Southerners also warned of the potential for an anti-American backlash if the December 2009 counter-terrorism operations ) which are widely perceived as American-led ) continue to be seen by Yemenis as illegitimate. (Note: Local media claimed that a December airstrike in Abyan killed dozens of civilians and few al-Qaeda members. Many of post's southern contacts believe that al-Qaeda is connected to the ROYG and does not represent a legitimate threat to the state. End Note.) The regime, according to southern contacts, uses the excuse of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) to pursue political opponents ) from the JMP to the Southern Movement and the media. (Note: The regime has recently begun to use the term "the al-Qaeda/Southern Movement," despite the movement's repeated rejections of AQAP. End Note.) "The real al-Qaeda is this regime. We reject al-Qaeda and want to work together against extremism," Mohammed Qassim Noman, chairman of the NGO Yemeni Center for Human Rights Studies, told PolOff on January 30. If the U.S. continues to be perceived as a willing partner in what southerners believe is a false cause, it could suffer significant damage to its already shaky image in Yemen. "They are mobilizing the masses against you because the regime is saying that they are going after this fake al-Qaeda for the Americans," the YSP's Daoud said. Islah's Aden Chief and MP Insaf Mayo said that the U.S. needs to support Yemen's political moderates. "The danger is that Yemen is so much like Afghanistan ) modern, moderate ideas are marginalized and extremism promoted."

COMMENT

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¶5. (S) Given that a January 2010 poll by a local NGO suggests that 70 percent of southerners support secession, coupled with the fact that post's Aden contacts were unanimous in asking for the U.S. to reopen its consulate in their city, the time appears ripe for the U.S. to increase engagement with Yemen's turbulent southern governorates. However, considering regime sensitivity over the unity issue and U.S. policy supporting Yemen's unity and stability, expanding the U.S. presence in Yemen's south must be approached carefully, taking into account the need for ROYG partnership in ongoing counter-terrorism operations and the necessity of restoring public faith in the responsiveness of the government to its citizenry. The Embassy has begun a concerted effort to increase engagement via politically neutral means: increased penetration of public diplomacy programs including English language training in Mukullah, boosting the number of exchange program participants from Aden and the southern governorates, and increased PD outreach in Aden; new MEPI grants to local NGOs in Aden and Shebwa; and a reprioritization of development assistance targeting the southern governorates of Shebwah, Abyan, al-Dhale', Lahj and Aden. Security permitting, continuing to increase the number of official USG visitors to Aden and Hadramout will also go a long way to advancing mutual understanding and promoting long-term U.S. interests. END COMMENT.

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